Thrasybulus, d.388 BC

Thrasybulus (d.388 BC) was a supporter of Athenian democracy who rose to prominence late in the Great Peloponnesian War and then helped revive Athenian power in the aftermath of that war.

In 411 the Athenian democracy was overthrown and replaced by the oligarchy of the Four Hundred. The main Athenian fleet, which was then based at Samos, quickly emerged as the main source of opposition to the new regime. Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus were amongst the main leaders of this opposition. They helped fight off a takeover attempt by local oligarchs, and then convinced the Athenians within the fleet to swear an oath to maintain the democracy and continue with the war. A general assembly of the fleet then removed those amongst the generals who were suspected of supporting the oligarchy. New generals were then elected, including Thrasybulus.

The newly promoted Thrasybulus played a part in convincing the fleet to pardon and recall the controversial Athenian leader Alcibiades. Thrasybulus then commanded the ship that carried Alcibiades back to the fleet.

Thrasybulus then led a small flee of five galleys towards the Helleespont. He joined up with Thrasyllus, and commanded the right wing of the Athenian fleet at the battle of Cynossema, where his attack helped win the battle.

He was sent to gather money from Thasos, and rejoined Alcibiades and the main fleet just before the battle of Cyzicus. During that battle he was given the task of attacking the Spartan camp on land, and was hard pressed before reinforcements were sent to aid him. The battle ended as a crushing Athenian victory but the Spartans were saved from worse by their Persian allies.

In 407 he was given command of thirty ships and sent to Thrace, where he restored Athenian control over a number of rebel cities. He was also elected one of the year's generals, alongside Alcibiades. He was then caught up in Alcibiades's fall from grace. Alcibiades left his fleet to visit Thrasybulus at Phocaea. While he was absent his deputy fought and lost the battle of Notium. Alcibiades realised that he would be very vulnerable if he returned to the fleet, and decided to go into exile. Thrasybulus was removed from his command, but did remain with the fleet.

He was a subordinate commander at the battle of Arginusae, most famous for the execution of several of the victorious Athenian generals in the aftermath of the battle. Thrasybulus was said to have had a prophetic dream before the battle that predicted both the Athenian victory and the execution of the generals. During the battle he served as a ship commander, and was one of two appointed to carry out rescues after the battle. Instead he returned directly to Athens to take some of the credit for the victory. The mood soon turned sour, and Thrasybulus and his colleague Theramenes were put on trial after the commanding generals tried to blame them for the failures. This backfired, and in the end six of the victorious generals were forced to commit suicide. This probably played a part in the eventual Athenian defeat, both by removing some of their best commanders from the scene and by convincing other men not to risk taking up a post.

In the aftermath of the final Athenian defeat in the Great Peloponnesian War the Spartan leader Lysander set up a new system of government, with control held by a Board of Thirty, soon known as the Thirty Tyrants. Thrasybulus went into exile in Thebes, but he would soon return and play a major part in restoring the

Athenian democracy.

With Theban help he captured the fortress of Phyle. The tyrants sent a force to attack him, but were defeated. Thrasybulus then went onto the offensive. First he defeated a Spartan force under Callibius that had been sent to blockade him at Phyle, and then he captured Piraeus, where he gained the support of most of the population. The tyrants sent out another army, but this was defeated at Munychia. A standoff now developed, with the democrats at Piraeus, and a new oligarchy (The Ten) in command at Athens, while the survivors of the Thirty fled to Eleusis. The Ten called for help from Sparta, and an army led by Lysander and Libys was sent to put down the rebels. The Spartans inflicted a severe defeat on the democrats (battle of Piraeus, 403 BC), but were then saved by the intervention of King Pausanias, who arranged an armistice with them. Envoys were then sent to Sparta, and a general amnesty was agreed. The exiles were allowed to return to Athens, while the surviving oligarchs fled to Eleusis. Most of the oligarchs were soon eliminated, and another amnesty agreed with the survivors, for which Thrasybulus is given the main credit. The democracy was restored at Athens within a year of its apparent destruction, and Thrasybulus must be given much of the credit.

Battles of the Corinthian War

In 395 Thrasybulus proposed an alliance between Thebes and Athens, helping to trigger Athenian involvement in the Corinthian War. He then led an army to support Thebes, arriving at Haliartus in the aftermath of the battle in which Lysander had been killed. In 394 he commanded the Athenian continent at the battle of Nemea, an inconclusive Spartan victory in which the Athenians were defeated fairly early in the day.

In 390 he was given command of a fleet of forty ships and was sent to help the democratic elements on Rhodes. When he reached the area it became clear that the pro-Athenian democrats were fairly secure acoss most of the islands, while their enemies would be difficult to eliminate from their last strongholds. Thraysbulus decided not to risk an attack, and instead he moved up to Thrace, where he was able to bring the Odrysian princes Amadocus and Seuthes into an alliance with Athens. He then moved to Byzantium, where he helped restore democratic rule and an alliance with Athens. He then moved south, and captured Methymna on Lesbos. He then continued south, but was killed in his tent while camped near Aspendus on the Eurymedon River when the locals reacted to his men's raids into their territory.

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